

City of Socorro

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Fire Department Stands Ready

As already-hot-enough summer temperatures roll around to the Fourth of July, barbecues and fireworks will increase the danger of accidental fires at home. Joe Gonzales, Chief of the Socorro Fire Department, and his crew have Socorro covered, 24-7.

A firefighter's day starts at 7:00 am sharp, when he checks into the station. The first task is vehicle inspection, making sure the fire trucks and ambulances are loaded with supplies and that those supplies are where the crew can find them in a hurry.

The 15-member crew is split between the two fire stations: 2 members at the Main Station near the plaza, and 2 at the station across from Parkview School. One firefighter is "on call," which means he must be able to reach the

station within 8 minutes of being notified. The crew is on duty for 24 hours, then off duty for 48, so three 5-member crews rotate their workdays.

Firefighting is a job that requires fast thinking, constant education and training and topnotch physical fitness. All crew members have passed written and practical exams to reach the certification level of Firefighter I. They are required to gain their Firefighter II rating within 4 to 5 years, with training in hazardous materials awareness, structural firefighting, flammable liquids, rope rescue, hose and hydrant testing and arson detection, among others.

They must also be physically fit. They are required to don 50+ pounds of gear and equipment in less than a minute. They must be able to handle high-pressure water hoses, hoist ladders and carry heavy equipment.

But that's not all....

Socorro firefighters are also trained as Emergency Medical Technicians, all rated at least at the intermediate level. They are required to continue their training in both firefighting and emergency medical services to keep up on the latest changes in procedures.

Chief Joe Gonzales estimates that 90-95% of the calls the department receives are for emergency medical services, especially medical and trauma from motor vehicle incidents on the Interstate.



Curtis Greenwood and Kaleb Vanlandingham inspect the truck at the beginning of their shift.

“Electrical codes have changed so buildings are safer. We have a more aggressive fire prevention program now and insurance companies require businesses to keep up with their inspections,” Gonzales explained.

In the last 5 years, 50% of the fire fighting force retired. In fact, Joe Gonzales was one of the retirees, but when the fire chief retired the same year, Joe returned in his place. He says many apply to work on the fire crew, but few can pass the rigorous physical fitness exam—a fitness agility test that is job specific and involves strength and endurance.

To assist the firefighters in their duties and training, the main station was remodeled in 2005, creating room for them to study and work out. It contains a spacious living room, kitchen, workout room and bedrooms, as well as bays for equipment and vehicles.

Should you need their help this holiday season, or any time, whether for fire or medical assistance, just **dial 911**.



School of Mines Landscaping

Andrew Lucero and Rick Griego of the City Water Department are installing water lines and drip irrigation along School of Mines Road and Bernard Street as part of the School of Mines and Plaza Renovation Project.

Police Department Starts Local Chaplain Program

Socorro may be a small town, but it has its share of critical incidents that affect police officers both on and off duty. Three months ago the Department started a Chaplain program. Local pastors accompany officers on patrol when requested, go with officers to deliver death messages and assist as counselors in the mandatory debriefing of critical incidents, such as murders and violent crimes.

“We didn’t have that in the old day, you were just expected to suck it up. Before long, officers start having trouble sleeping—it wears on you. Later on it will come back and haunt you,” said Police Chief Lawrence Romero.

Officers are taking advantage of the program. “It’s way beyond my expectations the way they’ve been received,” said Romero.



Local pastors participating in the program are Chaplain Bob Farmer (Baptist), Chief Romero, Cpt. Mike Winders, Chaplain Tim Sawyer (Baptist Temple), Chaplain Doug May (Hope Lutheran) and Chaplain Bob Giron (Deacon, San Miguel). Photo courtesy Sgt. Angel Garcia and Socorro Police Department.

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